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Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 67/207, called for continued and enhanced efforts to assist small island developing States in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, and for strengthening United Nations system support to small island developing States. The Assembly also reaffirmed the call for the convening of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in 2014 and decided to convene in 2013 the preparatory process for the International Conference. The objective of the present report is to provide, for the consideration of Member States, an update on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and Mauritius Strategy, as well as an update on the preparations for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 67/207, reaffirmed the Declaration of Barbados[1] and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,[2] the Mauritius Strategy[3] and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.[4]

2. The same resolution also reaffirmed that small island developing States remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique challenges, including their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base and exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks, including to a large range of impacts from climate change and potentially more frequent and intense natural disasters.

3. In the light of those reaffirmations, the General Assembly called for commitments to take urgent and concrete actions to address the vulnerability of small island developing States. The Assembly also called for the convening in 2014 of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, as had been called for in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",[5] recognizing the importance of coordinated, balanced and integrated actions to address the sustainable development challenges facing small island developing States.

4. The resolution stipulates that the preparation for the regional preparatory meetings for the third International Conference should be held in each of the three small island developing States regions. An interregional preparatory meeting for all small island developing States will also be held to identify and develop input for the Conference, while maximizing coherence and complementarity with respect to other preparatory work. In the resolution, the General Assembly decided that the national, regional, interregional and substantive preparations should be carried out in a most effective, well-structured and broad participatory manner.

5. The present report also describes progress made towards furthering implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in accordance with resolution 67/207. The relevant bodies of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions,

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[1] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[2] Ibid., annex II.

[3] *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005* (United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[4] Ibid., annex II.

[5] Resolution 66/288, annex.

as well as regional intergovernmental organizations of small island developing States, major groups and Member States were consulted in its preparation.[6]

II. Outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

6. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development noted in its outcome document, entitled "The future we want" that small island developing States have made less progress than most other groupings or even regressed, in economic terms, especially in terms of poverty reduction and debt sustainability. It was also noted that for small island developing States overall progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven.[5]

7. The challenges that small island developing States faced, leading to the uneven achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, extended across the economic, social and environmental sectors. In the national reports issued in preparation for the third International Conference, multiple factors were outlined as affecting the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

8. Structurally, small island developing States remain affected by limited land resources, small populations and limited economies of scale. In addition, as a result of their high susceptibility to external economic and environmental shocks, small island developing States saw the progress made following the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Mauritius in 2005, stall as they suffered setbacks due to the recent global economic and financial crisis, the energy crisis and the food crisis.

9. In addition, attempts to address those structural and external challenges were further complicated by climate change and sea level rise, high debt, limited official development assistance, and frequent natural disasters. As a result, small island developing States felt on impact on social development, their economies and their ecosystems.

10. In the Caribbean region, small island developing States in general continue to face a number of constraints such as limited technical, financial and human resources, as well as the impact of exogenous factors, in particular the global financial crisis.

11. For small island developing States in the Pacific region, the recent synthesis report for the regional preparatory meeting of the third International Conference

[6] The report was prepared with input from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat; the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, Port of Spain); the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Pacific Operation Centre); the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction; the United Nations Environment Programme; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; the Commonwealth Secretariat; and the Indian Ocean Commission. Input was also collected from the national reports of small island developing States in preparation for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

noted that the underlying causes of a lack of progress in achieving inclusive and sustainable development were unfavourable enabling environments and governance.[7]

12. The Indian Ocean Commission noted that if there is a common challenge among the highly fragmented and diverse small island developing States of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS) region, it is for the more economically advanced States to divert themselves from a pathway of unsustainable development, with its highly adverse impact on essential natural resources and environmental services, and to help to channel the less advanced States to a development pathway that avoids such examples of severe environmental loss in its wake.[8]

13. In addition, for the small island developing States in the AIMS region, the absence of an active institutional framework akin to those operational for many years in the other two regions presents a serious challenge to coherent region-wide development.[8]

14. What the regional outlooks underscore is that small island developing States have different challenges that have significantly affected their ability to implement sustainable development.

III. Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy

15. Despite those challenges, however, proactive initiatives have been undertaken by most small island developing States, as well as by the international community, in pursuit of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy.

A. Small island developing States activities

16. In efforts to implement the Mauritius Strategy, small island developing States pursued different initiatives to accelerate national and regional implementation. There are many examples: those cited in the present report are illustrations highlighting the priority that the small island developing States are placing on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

17. Seychelles, for example, embarked on a comprehensive water supply development plan, launched in 2011 with support from the African Water Facility, in order to resolve protracted water shortages during the dry season, including increasing the capacity of the reservoir, tackling non-revenue water and enhancing institutional capacity, among other actions. The activities are under implementation; however, the country is still experiencing persistent water shortages until those projects are completed.[9]

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[7] "Pacific regional synthesis report for consideration by the Pacific regional preparatory meeting, 10-12 July 2013, Nadi, Fiji". Available from sids2014.org.

[8] Indian Ocean Commission, "The divided region: progressing Rio+20 outcomes in the AIMS region, report for IOC".

[9] National reports are available from sids2014.org.

18. Similarly, in an attempt to address the possible impact of climate change on its economy and its citizens and their livelihoods, Mauritius developed and implemented the "Maurice Ile Durable" programme as well as the Government Programme 2010-2015.[9] This national sustainable development strategy has seen the development of a climate change mitigation and adaptation framework. In the framework, several priority sectors such as disaster risk reduction and management, renewable energy, water, coastal zones, fisheries, tourism, public infrastructure, health and agriculture have been targeted and actions are being taken at different levels, including policy and legislative review, the application of long-term dynamic tools, institutional strengthening, infrastructural works, the promotion of research and development, awareness-raising, education and training.

19. In the Pacific, the Tonga Energy Road Map 2010-2020[7] was developed and provides a detailed pathway towards a low carbon, cost-effective, technically sound, equitable transformation of the entire energy sector in Tonga, while in Papua New Guinea the Government established the Sovereign Wealth Fund in 2011 to support macroeconomic stabilization, the development objectives of the Government, including long-term economic and social development, and asset management in relation to assets accrued from natural resource revenue.[9]

20. In 2011, Belize established the National Climate Change Committee as a broad-based multi-stakeholder committee composed of non-State public and private sector members to coordinate the implementation of policies and measures designed to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on the environment and to adapt to such changes. It is expected that the Committee will facilitate the mainstreaming of climate change policies.

21. In Guyana, the Low Carbon Development Strategy, updated for 2010, provides an overarching national framework for the transformation of that country's current economy to that of a "low-carbon economy".

22. Regionally, the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre and the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility signed a memorandum of understanding in August 2011 to better assist Caribbean countries in the development of their climate change adaptation strategies, while members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group in the Pacific have committed to promoting green growth as a tool and as a development approach to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development.

23. Additionally, the ninth Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas will take place in Fiji in December 2013, where a new five-year Action Strategy for Nature Conservation will be formulated.

B. Support by the United Nations system and regional and international organizations

24. To strengthen the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, entities of the United Nations system have put a stronger emphasis on small island developing States in their work. While United Nations system entities focus on different areas of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, collectively they provide substantial support to small island developing States.

25. At the global level, the Small Island Developing States Unit in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat has been entrusted with a broad range of functions aimed at providing support for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, including but not limited to technical assistance and advice, support to the intergovernmental process, inter-agency coordination and reporting on progress made.

26. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States is mandated to undertake advocacy work in support of small island developing States and to mobilize resources for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy.

27. At the regional level, the regional commissions have the responsibility of advocacy and the coordination of support to small island developing States, while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has provided assistance with implementation at the national level.

28. The inter-agency consultative group, chaired by the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, helps to ensure coordination among many activities by the United Nations system and other regional and international organizations. The "ECESA plus", a mechanism used for the preparation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, has continued to be a useful channel for United Nations system coordination. It also ensures coordination of the United Nations system for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

29. United Nations entities are actively involved in the strengthening of information exchange and facilitating networking among stakeholders. The Small Island Developing States Network, SIDSNet (sidsnet.org), continues to provide a general portal of information on the small island developing States and the sustainable development agenda, while the third International Conference website (sids2014.org) provides more specific information on the Conference itself.

30. The Small Island Developing States Unit has facilitated the development of a joint education programme on sustainable development for small island developing States, helping to strengthen the collaboration within the small island developing States University Consortium. The initiative is an excellent example of cooperation among universities based in small island developing States regions, including the University of the West Indies, the University of the South Pacific, the University of Mauritius, the University of the Virgin Islands and the University of Seychelles. Funded by the Government of Spain, the project has developed a common platform for accessing online courses offered to registered students at member universities.

31. The lack of an effective monitoring framework for global commitments related to the sustainable development of small island developing States has been frequently noted. Small island developing States have repeatedly called for the strengthening of national disaggregated data and information systems, as well as the strengthening of analytical capabilities for decision-making, tracking progress and the development of vulnerability-resilience country profiles.

32. The key issue is not only the availability of reliable data and information, but also the need for analytical frameworks to be used as decision-making tools both for small island developing States and as a basis for developing criteria beyond gross

domestic product (GDP) for assessing the status of vulnerability and resilience of small island developing States on a country-by-country basis.

33. Efforts are under way to develop a country vulnerability-resilience profile as a monitoring and evaluation tool/handbook through expert consultations and pilot testing in a number of small island developing States countries, to be available early 2014.

34. With respect to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has conducted assessments of the social and economic effects of climate change on agriculture, coastal and marine resources, health, energy, tourism and water in the Caribbean region.

35. Recommendations have been made for adaptation and mitigation strategies based on cost-benefit analyses. In the area of mitigating the impacts of climate change, ECLAC is currently implementing an initiative funded by the German Agency for International Cooperation that provides support to Aruba, the Bahamas and Suriname in completing national energy policies. ECLAC is also conducting an analysis of the fiscal and regulatory barriers to the implementation of energy efficiency measures and renewable energy technologies.

36. With respect to tourism, efforts have focused on examining strategies for the further diversification of the tourism economy in the Caribbean. In that regard, research is ongoing towards completing a recreational demand study of the yachting and marina sector in order to inform policymaking for the further development of this subsector.

37. ECLAC is currently conducting a study entitled: "The impact of trade and growth in the Caribbean". Initial results indicate that trade within the region has been very limited and the recent crisis has constrained trade even further. Regional trade is now just 13 per cent of total Caribbean trade. The global recession affected trade by limiting the demand for Caribbean exports, and that in turn has affected growth. The great challenge in the Caribbean region is to develop new products to sustain exports to new markets while promoting exports to existing markets. ECLAC is also focusing on how Caribbean cultural service providers, including musicians, dramatists and fashion designers, can establish a more successful commercial presence in the European Union.

38. In the area of knowledge management, the focus is on the use of information and communications technologies in support of disaster risk management in the Caribbean as well as building capacity in the use of information and communications technology tools to address disaster risk management in the information society.

39. In the area of gender and health, ECLAC, in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), has prepared a profile identification of the main barriers and opportunities linking gender and health.

40. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) intersectoral platforms include a platform entitled "Contribution to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the sustainable development of small island developing States" and are an innovation in the way UNESCO conceives,

manages and implements its programme in an interdisciplinary manner. The platforms define a joint strategy and establish operational teams made up of colleagues working in various sectors and, most importantly, in various regions and countries of the world.

41. Involving all five programme sectors and field offices covering small island developing States, the platform ensures that the unique multidisciplinary expertise of UNESCO in science, culture, climate change and education for sustainable development, in natural, cultural and intangible heritage and in the articulation of scientific and indigenous knowledge and knowledge management and information for decision-making is productively used in addressing the multiplicity of challenges facing small island developing States.

42. UNESCO also addresses the challenges of preparing skilled graduates for the needs of the small island developing States labour market, through strengthening technical and vocational education and training. Programmes target primarily the significant percentage of out-of-school youth and aim to empower them with skills that will help them contribute to the development of their society.

43. The global Sandwatch programme supported by UNESCO makes a significant contribution towards tackling climate change and coastal monitoring issues. Sandwatch has been integrated into the national school curriculum in the Pacific island nation of Kiribati. The integration of Sandwatch into the Kiribati curriculum allows teachers and students to understand and contribute to global climate change observations through first-hand practical activities in their local environment.

44. Several new sites on small island developing States were added to the World Heritage List, including the Phoenix Island marine protected area in Kiribati, the Bikini Atoll nuclear test site in the Marshall Islands and historic Bridgetown and its garrison in Barbados. Five small island developing States (Fiji, Jamaica, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago and Vanuatu) ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

45. Pacific islands and territories are currently carrying out the Pacific World Heritage Action Plan (2010-2015). UNESCO has been coordinating a hub of regional agencies, non-governmental organizations, experts and communities with the aim of enhancing knowledge management, capacity-building and partnership building in the management of the Pacific heritage. In the Caribbean, the Caribbean Capacity Building Programme is now fully operational and benefits 16 Member States and 20 World Heritage Sites. It also builds and strengthens capacities in heritage management, fosters cooperation in the region and contributes to understanding the synergies between heritage conservation and new developments.

46. The preservation and promotion of local and indigenous knowledge has been implemented by UNESCO in several small island developing States, including the Solomon Islands through working with teachers and local communities and in Timor-Leste through activities such as action research, the development of environmental educational materials and training sessions, emphasizing the important role of local and indigenous knowledge in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and community-based resource management.

47. Under the framework of the small island developing States intersectoral platform in the Indian Ocean, the Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles and Réunion (France) are supported in the transmission and recognition

of traditional medicine through the formation of a subregional network of practitioners. They will support each other to exchange best practices and dialogue with policymakers and scientists, develop good practice guidelines and ethical codes, improve the sustainable use of plant resources and develop appropriate education programmes.

48. Through the Youth Visioning for Island Living initiative, which promotes capacity-building and the involvement of youth in the sustainable development of small island developing States, young people are given the opportunity to design, plan, implement and evaluate climate change, as well as projects related to health (HIV/AIDS) in their islands. The initiative is under implementation in Dominica, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Jamaica, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Seychelles and Niue.

49. Scaling the economic impact of disasters provides a clearer picture on how development in small island developing States is affected by disasters. For example, Cyclone Evan, which hit the South Pacific in 2012, resulted in total losses equivalent to one third of the annual economic output of Samoa. Similarly, losses associated with the 2010 earthquake in Haiti are estimated to have exceeded 15 per cent of GDP. Given their small size, individual hazard events such as cyclones may affect an entire territory and economy. Disasters can therefore destroy decades of capital investment and hard-fought development gains and are often followed by slow and costly recovery. The increased indebtedness and constrained fiscal space can have long-term developmental consequences.

50. Countries with low levels of investment and high average annual losses are less likely to be able to absorb losses, even from more frequent, less severe events. For example, Jamaica observed annual average losses due to disasters between 1991 and 2011 that were equivalent to 2.6 per cent of its average annual investment. That contributed to its sluggish growth over that period.[10] Similarly, Vanuatu and Tonga are estimated to sustain average annualized losses at 6.6 and 4.4 per cent, respectively.[11]

51. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction supported consultations on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action, in the Caribbean and the Pacific. Both regions drew on their experiences of implementing regional strategies in support of the Hyogo Framework for Action. In support of ongoing consultations, a study, jointly supported by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the UNDP, analysed current levels of integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the Pacific, with an emphasis on the institutional and policy environment.[12]

52. The Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management met in Noumea, New Caledonia, from 17 to 21 September 2012, and committed to developing an integrated regional strategy for disaster risk management and climate change, to commence in 2016.

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[10] United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, *From Shared Risk to Shared Value — The Business Case for Disaster Risk Reduction* (Geneva, 2013).

[11] Abhas K. Jha and Zuzana Stanton-Geddes, *Strong, Safe, and Resilient: A Strategic Policy Guide for Disaster Risk Management in East Asia and the Pacific* (Washington, D.C., the World Bank, 2013).

[12] United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and UNDP, *Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific* (Suva, 2012).

53. The seventh Caribbean Conference on Comprehensive Disaster Management was held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, from 3 to 7 December 2012, on the theme "Building disaster resilience — a shared responsibility". With the region's comprehensive disaster management strategy (2007-2012) approaching its end, the Conference assessed the level of progress, reviewed the gaps and articulated a strategy beyond 2012.

54. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) continues to implement a number of projects and initiatives in support of the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. Those projects and activities were implemented within global and regional projects and initiatives for and with the engagement of small island developing States.

55. In the Caribbean region, the major initiatives of UNEP include, but are not limited to, the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management in Caribbean small island developing States, a project to transform Dominica into an environmentally sound organic island and the Caribbean Biological Corridor project.

56. Within its ecosystem management subprogrammes, UNEP has started an island ecosystem management initiative in which a whole island is recognized as an ecosystem, applying the ecosystem-based approach to promote optimum use of island ecosystem services for human benefits and sustainable island development. On the basis of existing tools and methodologies, UNEP in 2012 started working with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme to establish good practices in supporting such a management approach, and once that is further developed, replication of the work in other regions of small island developing States will be expected.

57. The UNEP project on advancing Caribbean States' sustainable development agenda through green economy started in August 2012, targeting CARICOM member States and starting with pilot countries of Haiti, Jamaica and Saint Lucia. The overall objective of the project is to enable countries in the Caribbean to advance sustainable development through the design and implementation of policies that result in a strong and sustainable economy that is environmentally responsible and socially inclusive. The project will lead to four main outputs: (a) a regional multi-stakeholder green economy network and similar platforms in the three pilot countries; (b) country-relevant investment and policy menus; (c) a Regional Centre of Excellence on green economy; and (d) a region-specific green economy capacity-building portfolio.

58. UNEP is preparing its publication on sustainable consumption and production best practices in Mauritius. The information in that publication should be relevant to all small island developing States in supporting appropriate measures to promote resource and energy efficiency and sustainable infrastructure with a view to accelerating the shift from bad consumption and production habits to a more sustainable lifestyle.

59. UNEP is also implementing the Sustainable Public Procurement and Ecolabelling Project. Within the project, and based on the experience acquired by UNEP on ecolabelling and sustainable public procurement, the project seeks to combine the two instruments to achieve maximum synergies and better deliver the common goal of stimulating the demand and supply of sustainable products.

60. UNEP is supporting the development of national contributions to the global monitoring plan under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. The countries that receive support include, but are not limited to: Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Palau, Solomon Islands, Samoa and Niue. UNEP also published a report on passive air sampling under the global monitoring plan for persistent organic pollutants in March 2012. It summarizes the work and the results of the monitoring of persistent organic pollutants in support of the global monitoring plan according to article 16 of the Stockholm Convention. Ambient air concentrations of persistent organic pollutants are compared around the world. The report includes 14 small island developing States in the Pacific region, Africa and the Caribbean.

61. UNEP engaged as well in extensive activities addressing the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in climate change and energy resources, coastal and marine resources and resources biodiversity resources, and institutional strengthening.

62. UNEP is coordinating the Regional Seas Programmes under its global Regional Seas Coordination framework. Each year coordination meetings are organized by UNEP. Representatives from relevant Regional Seas Programmes participate in the coordination activities, including the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (based on the Noumea and Waigani Conventions), the Caribbean Environment Programme (Cartagena Convention), the Nairobi Convention, the Mediterranean Action Plan and Barcelona Convention, and the Abidjan Convention. Issues related to small island developing States were also discussed in the coordination meetings, such as the green economy and island-based ecosystem management. Each relevant Regional Seas Programme implemented activities specific to small island developing States.

63. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been assisting in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in the Caribbean and Asia and Pacific regions where most of the small island developing States are located. For example, FAO has supported a number of activities through technical and trust fund projects in the Caribbean and the Pacific Island States, notably in strengthening risk management capabilities, promoting climate change adaptation and ensuring food security and protecting biodiversity. A thematic website is under development to show the work of FAO in different areas through establishment of a dedicated website (fao.org/sids). In addition, a global e-consultation was launched with the objective of encouraging dialogue and seeking inputs that will contribute to the preparatory process aimed at addressing the main challenges and opportunities for small island developing States.

64. Support has been provided to the regional preparatory meetings (Caribbean, Pacific, and AIMS) for the third International Conference on small island developing States through the organization and financing of side events, participation in panel and round-table discussions, presentations during plenary session and bilateral discussions. Efforts were made to provide substantive and technical inputs to delegations on the topics within the mandate and core area of FAO during the preparatory process.

65. At the end of 2012, FAO signed a memorandum of understanding with the African, Caribbean and Pacific States to strengthen collaboration on food insecurity, malnutrition, hunger, natural resources management and climate change, and a variety of international funds are being mobilized to facilitate the agreement.

66. The Commonwealth Secretariat has a long history of targeted research and advocacy on behalf of the small island developing States. From 2012 to 2013 the Secretariat, through its ongoing consultative process with small island developing States, sought to identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of small island developing States and ways and means to address them, and expand existing networks and identify partners for collaborating on key activities.

67. The resulting programme of activities in support of small island developing States focused on building resilience, migration and development, tourism, the Millennium Development Goals and building capacity. The Commonwealth Secretariat also used its convening power to host several major international meetings and conferences that brought together small island developing States and key development partners. The meetings provided an effective platform to influence outcomes in support of small island developing States in key institutions that influence global resource allocation. In the context of the Secretariat's advocacy and policy research programme on behalf of small States, the Secretariat conducted several studies that were aimed at enhancing the understanding of the unique challenges that those countries face in their quest to reduce their vulnerabilities and strengthen resilience.

68. In March 2012, the Commonwealth Secretariat convened a meeting of experts on migration and development in Jamaica to discuss developmental challenges and benefits of migration in small island developing States and other small States. The findings of several studies commissioned by the Secretariat on migration and development in small States were shared. The studies, which covered migration and development issues in small island developing States and other small States from the Pacific, Caribbean and AIMS regions, were further refined through the consultation and will be published as a book by the Secretariat in October 2013.

69. As part of its ongoing efforts to build capacity in small island developing States, the Commonwealth Secretariat developed and delivered a framework known as International Architecture for Environment and Sustainable Development, which provides policymakers and development practitioners in small island developing States and other small States with an understanding of the tools and the governance frameworks at different levels of governance, from local to international, to effectively implement sustainable development in their respective countries.

70. The Commonwealth Secretariat continued to work closely with the World Bank. The Secretariat participated in the annual small States forum held during the International Monetary Fund/World Bank annual meetings, and worked jointly with the World Bank on a workshop on data challenges facing small island developing States and other small States. The two institutions also recognized the importance of the tourism sector and its potential catalytic role in those economies and commissioned three studies to explore the transmission mechanisms of tourism to the development of small States. The studies were presented and discussed at the Second Global Biennial Conference on Small States, held in 2012, and will be published in a forthcoming book, entitled *Tourism and Inclusive Growth in Small Island Developing States*.

71. The Commonwealth Secretariat signed a memorandum of understanding with the Indian Ocean Commission and the Commonwealth of Learning to ensure the

continued delivery of a training course on the International Architecture for Environment and Sustainable Development framework in the Indian Ocean region.

72. The Commonwealth Secretariat has supported the development of a partnership between the regional organizations of small island developing States in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regions focused on climate financing and sustainable development concerns. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the Secretariat facilitated a side event on 20 June 2012 with the Indian Ocean Commission, the secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre on pathways to climate-resilient, low-carbon economies. The event included a film and debate on priority concerns of small island developing States in the Conference process and the signing of memorandums of understanding between the organizations.

IV. Preparations for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States

73. As outlined above, the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/207 on convening the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, as asked for in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.[5]

74. Resolution 67/207 also set out the modalities for the preparations of the Conference. In paragraph 5, it was decided that the Conference should:

(a) Assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, building on, inter alia, existing reports and relevant processes;

(b) Seek a renewed political commitment by all countries to address effectively the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States by focusing on practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, inter alia, through mobilization of resources and assistance for small island developing States;

(c) Identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities for the sustainable development of small island developing States and ways and means to address them, including through the strengthening of collaborative partnerships between small island developing States and the international community;

(d) Identify priorities for the sustainable development of small island developing States for consideration, as appropriate, in the elaboration of the post-2015 United Nations development agenda.

75. In preparation for the International Conference, the Secretary-General of the United Nations appointed the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs to be Secretary-General of the Conference.

76. National consultations were held in small island developing States prior to regional meetings, resulting in national reports, which led to regional synthesis reports.[13]

77. As mentioned above, the regional preparatory meetings stipulated in the resolution were held in July 2013, in Fiji, Jamaica and Seychelles and the interregional meeting will be held in August in Barbados. The process will be completed before the modalities resolution for the global process for the International Conference is adopted, and the global process itself begins later this year. The regional preparatory meetings helped to concretize regional priorities for the Conference.

Caribbean regional preparatory meeting

78. The outcome stressed the ongoing challenges that Caribbean small island developing States face, including climate change, natural disasters, crime and violence, high rates of unemployment — especially among women and youth — and the resulting brain drain, non-communicable diseases and other health concerns, and debt. It called on the international community to support small island developing States through technology transfer, capacity development, the capitalization of the Green Climate Fund and the promotion of renewable energy, among other actions. Caribbean small island developing States also expressed the urgent need for development partners to consider measures other than per capita GDP when making decisions regarding financial assistance and debt relief.

Pacific regional preparatory meeting

79. Climate change and ocean-related issues figured prominently in the Pacific outcome document of the regional meeting. Other issues raised included health, especially non-communicable diseases, social protection and inclusion, information and communication technologies, transport and energy and renewable energy. To advance those and other priorities, the representatives of the Pacific region decided to propose a theme for the third International Conference: "The sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships".

Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas region regional preparatory meeting

80. Central to the outcome of the meeting was the concept of the "blue economy", encompassing the full range of economic and social development that the ocean can drive. The AIMS region addressed issues of peace and security, especially in the face of international piracy and organized crime, as well as renewable energy, non-communicable diseases, special financing mechanisms and trade instruments for small island developing States, sustainable management of national resources and the need for a strengthened AIMS regional coordination mechanism and institutional support for small island developing States.

81. Following the regional preparatory meetings, the small island developing States began preparations for the interregional preparatory meeting, which would contribute to the global preparatory process for the third International Conference.

[13] For more information on the reports, see sids2014.org.

Small island developing States were also expected to engage in discussions on the International Year of Small Island Developing States while also discussing the preparations for the Conference.

82. Those activities during the International Year of Small Island Developing States will help the international community to consider how much of the Mauritius Strategy has already been implemented and to ensure that the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy will be advanced at the third International Conference.

V. Expert Group Meetings as substantive inputs into preparations for the third International conference on small island developing States

83. There were a number of Expert Group Meetings organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, UNEP, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and others, often jointly, which were specifically targeted to provide substantive inputs to the small island developing States preparatory process.

Expert Group Meeting entitled "Strengthening partnerships towards disaster risk reduction for small island developing States"

84. The meeting was held at the fourth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and was organized by the Office of the High Representative and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. The importance of preparedness was stressed as being of vital importance, including the use by authorities of simple language and graphics to explain hurricanes. Those messages have been translated into guidelines and recommendations and broadcast as early warning messages through various media. Integrating disaster risk reduction into education and awareness curricula from primary school level upwards, and including at the grass-roots/community level, was also stressed as an important avenue for improving preparedness and building capacity for resilience.

Expert Group Meeting entitled "The Significance of marine science and technology and importance of capacity-building and marine technology transfer to small island developing States"

85. The meeting was organized by the Office of the High Representative, UNESCO, the Indian Ocean Commission and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat. It concluded that, for small island developing States, the ocean is an issue that clearly cuts across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of their sustainable development objectives. Small island developing States have demonstrated leadership in managing the living marine resources that occur under their respective jurisdictions and are again leading the way on matters concerning exploration and exploitation of non-living marine resources. The need to build capacities and scientific know-how remains a crucial component for the States' sustainable development aspirations and indeed for tackling the multifaceted adaptation and mitigation requirements of climate change.

Symposium on Understanding Ecological and Social Resilience of Island Systems

86. The Symposium was organized by the Office of the High Representative in partnership with the American Museum of Natural History, and participants stressed that island ecosystems present unique challenges for conservation owing to distinctive ecological and evolutionary processes and vulnerability to threats. It was recalled that biological diversity on islands was not only of global importance but likewise was suffering from numerous threats, including natural disasters, diseases, overexploitation, deforestation, the drainage of wetlands, the loss of habitat, illegal trade in endangered species and climate change. The secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity considers species on islands to be at most risk of extinction. To date, 95 per cent of bird, 90 per cent of reptile, 69 per cent of mammal and 68 per cent of plant extinctions worldwide have occurred on islands.

Expert Group Meeting entitled "Small island developing States and the post-2015 development agenda"

87. Organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, key issues identified for consideration are set out below.

Social dimension of sustainable development

88. For development in small island developing States to be truly sustainable, social issues must be given a new prominence in the post-2015 development agenda. Inequality itself can inhibit growth, and those involved in setting the post-2015 development agenda are urged to work towards social inclusion by addressing a range of social development issues, including: (a) supporting and creating opportunities for employment for all demographic groups; (b) attention to women's empowerment and to issues of importance which have not previously been specified in the Millennium Development Goals, such as domestic violence; and (c) strengthening the quality of education and health services, rather than focusing only on quantity of services, and expanding tertiary and vocational education.

Addressing debt and access to global capital markets

89. The economic challenges of small island developing States are urgent, especially those of Caribbean countries with high debt burdens, those lacking access to global capital markets and those barred from access to concessional financing owing to their categorization as "middle income countries" on the basis of GDP. To address those challenges, the international community must consider reforms to the global financial architecture in order to create an environment that encourages investment in the resiliency of small island developing States. Small island developing States also need differentiated treatment and access to concessional financing based on the fair assessment of their respective vulnerabilities and resilience.

Addressing the existential threat of climate change

90. Climate change remains the central threat for many small island developing States, not least because sea-level rise may undermine their territorial integrity. The developed world holds the responsibility for climate change mitigation through the reduction of carbon emissions. The urgent need for financing for adaptation and the development of a loss and damage mechanism was highlighted.

(i) Energy dependency and the need to develop renewable energy resources

(j) Increasing degradation and scarcity of water resources

(k) Reaching the limit of land capacity

(l) Waste for resources

(m) Indiscriminate and increasing use of pesticides

(n) Synergizing local, traditional and modern science as a basis for sustainable island development

(o) Developing an ocean-based blue-green economy

(p) Overfishing and potential collapse of inshore marine ecosystems

(q) Unique human capacities for island sustainability

(r) Climate and environmental change driving population displacements

(s) Exploring the potential of unexploited natural resources in small island developing States

(t) Global contaminants affecting small island developing States

(u) Impending agro-ecosystem breakdown and loss of agrobiodiversity

95. The social and economic issues identified in the course of the meeting and its preparations included:

(a) Need to diversify small island developing States economies

(b) Innovative approaches to debt relief

(c) Shoring up traditional local and indigenous knowledge

(d) Reinforcing social cohesion

(e) Rediscovering opportunities for youth

(f) New challenges in gender

(g) Health challenges in small island developing States

(h) Preserving an authentic cultural heritage and identity

(i) Making tourism sustainable

(j) Climate and economic drivers of migration

(k) The future of food security in small island developing States

(l) Freshwater management for the twenty-first century

(m) Need for enhanced disaster preparedness

(n) Economic and social impact of climate change

(o) Diminishing resources for development financing

Strengthening monitoring systems and the data underpinning them

91. The experts recommended that the strengthening of the data gathering and analysis capacity of small island developing States should be approached with an eye to bolstering knowledge management systems and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The frameworks should be piloted at the national level and then rolled out to a regional and then global scale. It is crucial that data collection methodologies and monitoring and evaluation frameworks are user-friendly and based on bottom-up consultative processes. With that approach, a framework will accurately reflect the vulnerability and resilience of small island developing States as well as the heterogeneity within and among the three regions.

Advancing high-quality partnerships

92. The experts were of the view that, in the post-2015 development landscape, partnerships have the potential to advance a new paradigm in development cooperation, moving beyond the traditional donor-recipient relationships.

Expert Group Meeting entitled "Emerging issues in small island developing States"

93. The meeting was held as part of the "Foresight" process initiated by UNEP, which uses a methodology originally designed to identify emerging environmental issues in the lead up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. UNEP decided to apply the methodology with a focus on small island developing States. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs joined the work by bringing together experts from small island developing States for parallel discussions and to explore interlinkages. The experience of the Expert Group Meeting has led the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNEP to explore a more integrated approach to identifying and refining emerging issues in the future, with great potential benefits for the advancement of holistic sustainable development in small island developing States and beyond.

94. The emerging environment issues identified through the "Foresight" process initiated by UNEP and narrowed down at the meeting came up with the following themes, which are being further refined:

(a) Invasive alien species

(b) Irreversible loss of tropical montane cloud forest

(c) Coastal squeeze: coastal deforestation and loss of ecosystem services

(d) Pacific deep-sea minerals mining and associated risks

(e) Disproportionate impact of climate change and sea-level rise in small island developing States

(f) Intensification of extreme events and external shocks and increasing vulnerability of small island developing States

(g) Accelerated beach and coastal erosion and breakdown in the sand and sediment budget

(h) Accelerating decline of ecosystem functions affecting food and livelihood security

VI. Conclusion

96. As noted in the outcome of the Mauritius Strategy +5 Review, and during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, small island developing States have had an uneven path towards the implementation of sustainable development strategies and programmes of action. There have been successful activities, however, by both small island developing States themselves and by the international community.

97. It is envisioned that the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States will provide renewed political commitment towards the sustainable development of small island developing States, while helping Member States to prepare for the post-2015 development agenda. The activities throughout 2013, and the planned activities for 2014, including for the International Year of small island developing States, will also help in raising awareness of the challenges faced by small island developing States and advancing strategies to address those challenges.